



ISSANJI

HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

57 Hartford Street, San Francisco, California, 94114. (415) 863-2507

- SPRING 1995 -

HSZC is a neighborhood Zen Temple. It is also called Issanji, "One Mountain Temple", after its founder Issan Dorsey Roshi. The center was started in 1980 and has offered a regular practice schedule since then. In residence is Abbot Zenshin Philip Whalen who takes care of the practice and teaching. Zenshin is available for dokusan (practice interviews) to answer questions and discuss student's practice. Please make appointments with him in advance.

WHAT IS DOKUSAN?

An Interview with Abbot Zenshin.
Facing the Wall, then Face to Face.

Jennifer Birkett: *I'm not sure how dokusan fits into the whole zen thing. We go into the zendo and sit- how do we ask questions about this?*

Zenshin: Dogen wrote a whole essay in the Shobo Genjo called Genjo Koan, the appearance of the koan in everyday life. Read that.

J: *Is that going to tell me about dokusan?*

Z: No, it's about questions about what you are doing.

J: *I'll check that out. There is not much written about dokusan anywhere, I found one definition that said it's a private interview between student and teacher in the privacy of the Zen Master's room. So what happens in dokusan?*

Z: You're not supposed to discuss what happens, but some people do. The usual thing is for the student to come in and ask something - or have something on their mind they want to ask about practice. The question comes from their experience of practicing. There are two things going on. You can decide to be a practicing layperson, and you may or may not ask to have a ceremony about it, have a rakasu. But in any case you would continue to sit, participate in zen ceremonies and talk with the teacher once in a while if you have questions. The other route is the thing about deciding to become ordained - ensui - then the relationship would be rather different, much more teacher-student serious.

J: *What kind of questions do people ask? Is it like a psychological encounter?*

Z: Yes that's all so. Poor Roshi used to have to sit and listen to relationships by the yard... Quite often people are worried about how zazen hurts their leg, or their legs go to sleep and it scares them.

J: *That's good to know, it makes me feel more relaxed.*

With zazen we face the wall, then dokusan is face to face - Oh my god there is another person here- the wall speaks and has eyes!

Z: The trouble is there isn't any other person... and nobody asking questions.

J: *But to go in for dokusan we have to set up a self in order to ask a question.*

Z: Yes that is so.

J: *What is the history of the dokusan tradition?*

Z: It goes back to the early days, when the Zen people didn't have temples of their own. A teacher and followers would get together and rent a room to do zazen, usually in a Vinaya temple. One of the ways dokusan was done was that the teacher would talk at some point during a kinhin period, then students would ask questions. Usually dokusan was more informal, everyone together, and all the students could hear the questions and answers.

J: *I like that, less formal tension.*

Z: As far as I know that's how it worked. But then it became formalized later on when the Zen people got organized into temples and monasteries with hierarchies of monks with different ranks, people having attendants and so forth. It became more complicated.

J: *If someone's never had dokusan, what are some training wheel questions? You say the question needs to come up out of the practice - lets say somebody wants to experience dokusan but has no idea...*

Z: That's good! let them come and find out. It has to be what it is. I asked Reb early on - what are you supposed to say? He told me, Oh Roshi is likely to talk about anything, stock market, movies.

J: *So this is a normal question, I mean you've asked this too.*

Z: Yes. So you just have to go in and see what happens. The first half dozen times of doing it was very

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hard for me - like you say - upsetting and scary about what you are going to do. And there was such a distance between occasions of seeing Roshi. While sitting one week some marvelous question would come up, but then roshi was out of town. Suddenly two weeks later they tap you on the shoulder and say dokusan, and you rush up there and where is your wonderful question? And then you have to fake it or not and figure out something to say.

J: *You're not in the same mind flow as when you asked for dokusan.*

Z: Yes it's different each time - you actually shouldn't be able to predict what's happening. It's not dangerous, I don't hit people.

J: *You helped me when I came in. I'd say-what do i do now? You'd direct me, Bow here bow there sit here. So if people want to get an interview - they should ask you directly?*

Z: When people ask me for dokusan, we make an appointment. I prefer to have people sit at least one period right before the interview. We get together after zazen - either in the morning or evening. It's much better after zazen because the person has a much clearer sense about their notions and feeling and so do I.

HSZC NEWS

Membership: There are two levels, Supporting and Practicing. Those who wish to support the temple are encouraged to become annual members at \$20 a year - you will receive newsletters by mail. Practicing members sit regularly, attend dokusan with Zenshin, and contribute \$40 per month/sliding scale.

Welcome to new member Sanaya Jones, who is also one of the Dharma Sisters Sitting Group.

HSZC Board of Directors: Perri Franskoviak retired from the Board due to a busy pressured schedule. Peter Camarda retired because of an injured ankle. Ron Wickliffe retired for health reasons. Don Herald was elected to the board.

Annual Members Meeting: Watch for the announcement of the annual member's meeting which will take place on a sunday early in May. Members of the Board of Directors and all voting members may nominate candidates for election to the Board. All members may vote on nominees.

A list of voting members will be posted, and all voting members will be notified of their eligibility to vote. A voting member is someone who has been a member for more than 3 months, and has established a practice relationship with the Abbot.

All members are invited to attend Board meetings, which meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:45 pm. We want your ideas and input for HSZC's future.

Zazen on New Year's Eve: Patrick Glennon rang the 108 bells while the hoards on Castro Street did their countdown, and blew party horns. Zenshin ended the sitting by saying - "ENGAGE!" We drank saki in the living room after.

Former abbot Steve Allen and his wife Angelique Farrow were in town over the New Year. Steve gave jukai for Jack Goldberg, who received the name Dragon Song.

Fire Exit: In order to bring HSZC up to building safety code, a fire exit from the third floor is required. We are in the process of getting estimates, but it looks like a \$3,000 project. The fire exit will probably be installed on the front face of the building. The design is inconspicuous, it will look like a drain pipe. Fundraising will start when we know more details.

MAITRI NEWS

Update On relocation Process

Maitri's application for \$1.2 million in federal funding was approved by the HOPWA Committee (Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS) in March. Fortunately this grant came from the 1994 Federal finance cycle, so is not in danger of being rescinded by the current political climate. Director George Hurd does not foresee any problems in obtaining final approval by the Redevelopment Agency Commission in April.

He says, "The Loans Commission's approval was the critical piece. \$1.2 million was approved, this figure is \$800,000 short of the \$2 million estimated cost for acquisition and rehab of 401 Duboce. Maitri must now look at ways to raise the difference. We didn't want to get all funding from one source for a couple of reasons - Maitri's focus is on quality of life for our residents, not on low cost provision of service. So we always expect to raise additional money to do the kind of work we do. We also don't want all 15 beds restricted by federal regulations, which require residents to be low income and

from the City of San Francisco. Three beds will be free from these requirements, which gives us more autonomy."

There are some conditional items with the HOPWA Federal funding arrangement. Open Hand currently rents the first floor of the Duboce location, and a rental agreement to ensure its continuity is needed. George says "they are definitely a compatible service provider. We plan to move the entrance of Open Hand from Duboce St. around to the Church street side. It is set up for 400 clients and currently they serve some 1200. There are often long lines of clients waiting outside on the sidewalk. Open Hand will be able to redesign a whole new entrance and reception area. They can also build a loading dock to make delivery of groceries easier. Also Open Hand would be able to provide food for Maitri's kitchen."

Another contingency issue with HOPWA funding includes a firm agreement with VNH (Visiting Nurses of Hospices) so they are able to provide the increased level of support Maitri will need with 15 residents as opposed to 8 now.

Maitri must also provide a reliable plan to reassure the government that they can raise the additional \$800,000 needed to complete the relocation project. They are putting together a leadership committee comprised of people who are able to make substantial contributions, or have access to those who can, which is a critical component for developing plans for outreach work, fund raising, and media campaigns.

"We will do a lot more outreach between now and June 1st when we close escrow, so that the community will know what is going on. We met with the merchants of Upper Market and Duboce Triangle Neighborhood groups, both were incredibly supportive. In this location Maitri is pretty low key, by intent, it is a residence, we don't want to lose that. But because we are expanding Maitri needs a more visible profile in order to enlarge its service base so we can provide the same quality of care."

There are designs of Maitri's new location layout on the back of George's door on the 3rd floor of #61. Please feel free to go up and take a look. He welcomes anyone who wants to plug into the relocation process - interior decorating, final structural designs, artists.

Volunteer Opportunity: Maitri is looking for a volunteer who likes to SHOP, especially with someone else's money, who has good taste and retail experience. The plan is to invest some of Maitri's money into Under One Roof, a nonprofit retail outlet program on Market Street. Risk is minimal with high probability of tripling even a small investment by the year end. Maitri needs someone

to manage this process, meet with buyers, check on inventory, sales and product selection.

House Meetings: Right now most of the Maitri residents are fairly ambulatory, so house meetings are starting up again, whereby residents can share in the planning process.

Obituaries: Please take a moment to honor those residents who died this winter. Jeff died on Feb 5, John on Feb 9, Lee on Feb 13, Jeff on March 2. Gil, our longest resident, died March 4. Miss Kitty died on March 12, Kevin on March 13, Arthur Fisher, a former Maitri resident, died at Zen Center hospice on March 10.

New Residents: Almost a whole new house at Maitri since the last newsletter. Please extend a welcome to the new residents. Jerry moved in Feb. 16. She is the first female resident in a long time. Hasan arrived Feb. 21. Mark came March 9, Mario and Bob on March 17, and Jim moved in March 20. Dave is the most senior resident.

Most of the residents are smokers right now, the front porch can get really crowded.

RAM DASS

On February 6, 1990 hospice advocate Ram Dass spoke at HSZC. The following are excerpts from his talk.

"I come here this evening because this place, Issan and the flock, are a heartfelt bunch, and in my learning in how emptiness and compassion go together, I'm always yearning to find beings who are exploring both simultaneously...

I was involved in creating dying centers... and the reason I created dying centers is that one of the effects of the practice was that my attitude towards death shifted. Once we start to feel the shift in our attitude towards death, we are able to see around us an incredible amount of suffering is due to the fear of death. Suddenly you realize you have a gift to share, a tiny bit of equanimity in the presence of that mystery. I saw that in the traditions I have studied.

In Asia people live their lives in preparation for the moment of their death. They live in a reincarnational universe and they saw the entire work of lifetimes was to prepare you for the mind moment of death so that there was neither aversion nor attraction so you could become

free of death.

When I looked at the institutions available for dying in the West, what I saw was the highest statement of social institutions for death was the intensive care units, in which neither dogs nor children are allowed. Then along came Hospices in England. What that did is bring psychology back in- said here is a human being suffering and frightened that needs help and support and we will provide that.

Both these models come out of a desire to help, but neither of these models in and of themselves deal with issues of death. Both of them feel that death is unfortunate, an error, a break down of the system. And it would be better if you didn't die.

But if you taste of the space where the law (dharma) unfolds, and you look at the awful beauty of the unfolding of form, the judging mind of whether death is good or bad becomes just another lawful manifestation of old cheese you ate in some previous life. Just old karma running off. "You don't even know why you're alive", Ramana Maharshi said, "so why are you worried about when you die?"

I thought, wouldn't it be great to have an institution which was basically an ashram in which the people that came there to die came there to awaken to the process of dying... basically everybody was there to awaken. And the fact that some were dying and some caring for them was just some second level astral drama, nothing to be taken with too much gravity.

It wasn't until I came to this institution - Hartford Street Zen Center and Maitri, that I began to see my dream that has been going on since 1976, manifested. Not in the way I predicted, two social institutions interfacing in the same space. But coming here is coming to leading edge of my dream.

AIDS... working with youth, with all things that epidemic brings to mind, with deep deep fears that sexuality and pleasure linked in a puritanical culture brings up. Linking death and sex and every symbology of unconscious linkage is so profound. It's dealing with all social value structures in society that are conservative... what do you do with gays... if that isn't a window of opportunity I don't know what is. Everybody is facing sickness, social prejudice - the whole thing is open.

What an institution like this does is say, we respond with openness, we don't respond by clutching, judging, pushing. We respond by being...

ZAZEN WITH A VIEW

Feb. 20. It's zazen time - I get the seat near the door and face the white wall, riding my breath, spine quivering like an antenna. Eavesdropping. I hear Percy wheel out Kevin and Dave to the front porch of #61, where they light up cigarettes. Someone stops by with a dog who runs up to Dave - it's Tina the sausage dog! Donna, a volunteer arrives, and she sounds tired - it was a sardine can rush hour on Muni. Kevin is coughing a lot, my body tenses at the sound. Now they talk about John's passing last week.ⁱ Sadness. Kevin is wheeled inside to use the bathroom.

After zazen, I sit with Dave on the porch, we smoke Marlboros. He hands me the sacred black plastic ashtray. It's a cold, rainy dark night. Dave's dressed in red pants, blue flight jacket and a woolen hat. He's a Scorpio born Nov. 10. He instructs me in porch meditation. Points out the neighborhood cats, notes the passing people's relationships with their dogs- that guy is too rough. We laugh at the frustration of the car people who circle the block looking for parking spots.

Then Dave looks up at the wet night sky for a long spell. It's peaceful here, he says, I come out late at night sometimes and look at all the stars. No stars tonight. An old lady picks through the blue recycling boxes on the sidewalk, searching for cans. Dave remarks, you see the whole world go by from these steps. Kevin is wheeled out again, wearing his rainbow colored woolen beret. He tends to trance out into samadhi states mid sentence.

March 13. Zazen. I hear Dave on porch say - Kevin died this afternoon, Miss Kitty died Saturday. His voice mixed with the sound of falling rain. How to be with this? Dave isn't on the porch after zazen.

March 14. Zazen. I hear Dave greet a dog, oh what a cute scotty! Twinkle is a white terrier, NOT a scotty, corrects the owner. After zazen, I sit with Dave on the porch. He's wearing Kevin's rainbow beret now, and has Kevin's black cigarette pouch on his lap. Dave grieves for his friend - I feel empty inside. Kevin was my buddy...

March 24. Zazen. A mockingbird sings in the back garden. The bell signals end of meditation, then it's on the porch with Dave. He says, I feel like the waving man sometimes. People walk by on the street and wave at me, I don't even know them but I wave back. Percy the attendant pokes his head out the door - you OK out here Dave? he inquires. Yeah I'm fine. After the door closes Dave says, what does he think - I'm going to get raped out here? We laugh.

Alias Pierre and Claude plan a video production that will be shot from the porch of #61 - called VIEW FROM THE STEPS. Opening scene - the old lady collecting

bottles and cans from the recycling containers. Then interviews with people on the street. A shot of the tree-climbing cat. People going in and out of the zendo. They need lights for night shoots.

- Jennifer

EAVESDROPPING ON THE ABBOT

The delusion business is behind everything. We tell the self a story about what's happening and miss what's really going on.

TV show on Near Death Experiences.. there is a light at end of tunnel, everything is groovy... It's like The Tibetan Book of Dead says, we have experiences after we die, generated by our habits. We are all going to die. Lights at the end of the tunnel... are we near or far? When I die I'll start screeching for my mother, all levels of teaching totally forgotten.

YVES PRESCOTT THE VISIT

When Yves (pronounced Eve) read about Issan and Maitri in Tricycle magazine last year, he was so moved that he asked if he could come and help out. Yves spent his vacation at Maitri, cooking and caring for residents and volunteers.

He hopes to create a relief network in Montreal to help ease the work load of overburdened organizations by helping out with cooking and nutritional information. He says that in Montreal AIDS is 50% a heterosexual disease, because of the city's close connections with Haiti - a number of direct air flights each day.

Yves is currently is in the process of publishing his book - a satirical view of Quebec Politics, the last 10 years.

During his stay at Maitri, Yves could be found each evening in the kitchen, food prepping with Carey. She's an artist, who's been with Maitri for 2 years. He'd share observations on life at Maitri - resident's needs are so basic, simple, like meditator's. They respond so fully to care. One guy today called me Dad. I asked him, is there anything I can do for you? Yes, get me a new body.

Letter from Yves: "When I left Montreal on February 2nd, I had no idea how my stay at Maitri would turn out. I soon found out this time spent in San Francisco would

definitely change my life.... A few days after arrival, I was reminded as I read grave-stones at Mission Dolores, that early death is not unique to the AIDS era. It is indeed a timeless reality - as Lord Buddha said in the Dhammapada:

"Death approaches and takes hold of him in the same way as a raging river carries off a sleeping village."

While visiting yet another touristy spot, Alcatraz, I was struck by certain similarities between the infamous jail and Maitri. Nobody has ever been known to escape from Alcatraz alive. It was an essentially masculine environment. Inmates (or residents) could see normal life unfurl under their very own eyes while being prevented from taking an active part in it.

But these similarities can hardly describe Maitri properly. The hospice by contrast, is a refreshingly loving and caring milieu. It is also heir to a Buddhist tradition initiated by Sakyamuni who tended to sick monks who were abandoned by fellow monks...In a strange way I also felt I "abandoned" residents the day I left 57-61 Hartford Street. My love and admiration goes to them for being such brave warriors (my native indian heritage shows through here). I also have great respect and sympathy for the staff, volunteers and other hangers on. I consider myself fortunate to have experienced Buddhism as a life-style in your company."

HSZC SCHEDULE

MORNING: Monday to Saturday: Zazen - 5:00 to 5:40 am. Kinhin - 5:40 to 5:50 am Zazen - 5:50 to 6:30 am. Service.

EVENING: Monday to Friday: Zazen - 6:00 to 6:40 pm. Service.

SATURDAY: Informal ZAZEN 9:10 to 10 am. DHARMA talk 10 am. Tea and discussion. Donation appreciated.

MONDAY: Introduction to ZAZEN and ZENDO practice forms. Call for appointment. 5:00 pm.

DINNER Dinner is open to community MONDAY night after zazen. \$5 donation requested.

ZENDO PROTOCOL: Arrive at least 5 minutes before zazen. Bow as you enter the sitting area and when crossing in front of the altar. Once seated and the bell has rung, be as still as possible.

MONTHLY SCHEDULE

MEMORIAL SERVICE

A memorial service is held for Temple Founder, Issan Dorsey Roshi on the 6th day of each month.

SPECIAL BUDDHIST CLASS

Buddhism for Beginners, taught by Kokai Roberts, Zen priest from the Page Street Zen Center. Thursday evenings, 7:30 - 9:00 pm. For those who wish to build a foundation in Buddhism. \$30 members, \$35 non-members. Sign up sheet posted on zendo bulletin board. 7 meetings, beginning April 20.

OTHER GROUPS MEETING AT HSZC

DHARMA SISTER'S SITTING GROUP

For lesbian and bi women practicing any form of buddhism. Beginners and long term practitioners welcome. 7:20 to 8:00 pm Wednesdays. Call 415-826-7990.

SF MINDFULNESS COMMUNITY

Students of Thich Nhat Hahn. 2nd and 4th Sunday, 9:30 to 12:00. Meditation, precept recitation and discussion. Monday evening meeting location has been temporarily changed. For information call Barbara di Pietro, 415-864-2449.



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